

Indiana Department of Education



Division of Exceptional Learners

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 30, 2005 **SE 05-11**

TO: Directors of Special Education
Early Childhood Coordinators

FROM: Sheron Cochran
Education Consultant

RE: Guidance on ISTAR assessment for kindergarten children with disabilities that were assessed last year

For preschool students who were assessed in the spring of 2005, a follow-up assessment is expected between February 1 and April 30, 2006. These two data points are needed to measure progress. This includes students who were 5A last spring or are now of kindergarten age.

Indiana's State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report must document the extent of improvement of children with disabilities aged three to five in the areas of positive social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills including early language/communication, and early literacy, and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. Improvement in these areas is assessed with ISTAR.

Local Education Agencies are required to provide the State Education Agency (SEA) with information necessary for the SEA to carry out its duty information regarding performance goals. In order to comply with this performance goal, the reassessment preschool children with disabilities that were assessed last year is a condition of eligibility for Part B funds in order for the Division of Exceptional Learners to comply with the performance requirements [34 CFR 300.240 - Information for SEA].

Districts will be expected to maintain a participation rate of 95%. This will be calculated based on the number of preschool students who were assessed last spring, minus any students who have left the district. If new students who were assessed last year transfer to your district, these students will be added to the number of assessments expected. In addition, assessments will be expected for any newly eligible students reported in the December 1 count.

The Division has received a number of questions regarding the ISTAR assessment for kindergarten children. The following Question and Answers are developed to provide further guidance.

Q. Last year, the 5A children with disabilities receiving services from a teacher and the SLP were assessed on the English, Math and functional skills by the teacher and the SLP. The SLP completed ISTAR ratings on the special interface for SLPs. The teacher and the SLP worked collaboratively to complete the assessment. By CCC decision, the kindergarten child was found eligible for communication disorder only. The child is now in the kindergarten class with a general education teacher and receives speech services by the SLP. Does the child need to be assessed in English, math, and functional skills in addition to the SLP assessment?

A. No. The Division will not require the full assessment. The current SLP will need to update ISTAR using the special interface for the SLP. The interface covers four areas: Social interaction, Comprehension, Expressive Communication, and Speech intelligibility. The Listen and Speak indicators from English are imbedded in these sections. The data will permit adequate analysis of improvement. It is not required to have the kindergarten teacher complete the English, math, and functional skills, but it would be useful in documenting skill improvement. This data will be utilized if it exists.

Q. Must all kindergarten children with disabilities including children with disabilities who were determined eligible this school year be assessed with ISTAR?

A. No. Only the children who were assessed as 5A children last year must receive a follow-up assessment this year.

Q. Do we have to reassess a preschool child who has been declassified and is no longer a child with a disability?

A. The Division does not require ISTAR assessment for children without a disability. However, this is rich data that will be lost if the child is not reassessed. The number of children in this category will most likely be small. Perhaps a teacher familiar with ISTAR, could assist the kindergarten teacher who has not been trained in ISTAR so that progress could be measured. This data will be utilized if it exists.

Q. We didn't realize that that students who were receiving special education services from a teacher and speech-language services from an SLP were to be assessed by both the teacher and the SLP. Is this true?

A. Yes. If the student receives special education services from a teacher and also sees an SLP for speech services, ISTAR must be completed by both the teacher and the SLP. The ISTAR is completed collaboratively. The SLP utilizes the speech interface. There are assessment elements that are specific to SLP expertise in addition to the assessment elements in the Listening and Speaking standard in English/language arts. Students with communication disorder who receive services **solely** from the SLP will not be assessed in English, math, or the functional achievement indicators.

Q. Who is responsible for adding/editing student names to ISTAR?

A. Students can be added to ISTAR from any teacher or administrative account. Some school systems find it easier to first have the teachers enter into ISTAR the students on their caseloads. Other districts place the students in the teacher accounts as a first step. The process is a local decision.

Q. Is the ISTAR assessment and reporting date the same as for school-age students?

A. No. The state data collection date is April 30, 2006. ISTAR is meant to be an on-going, integrated process. Assessment begins as the teacher and/or therapists become familiar with incoming students. ISTAR assessment must be updated and completed between February 1 and April 30.

CC: Robert A. Marra
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